Let leaders hear our demands for climate action

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Body

Glasgow turned a different kind of green last week. Beyond its grassy outskirts, the city has hosted the United Nation's 26th conference on climate change, called COP26. Politicians, diplomats, and members of civil society are in attendance, with the promise of delivering real climate action - for the 26th time.

The responsibility of addressing the climate crisis and its related injustices, however, cannot and will not be left exclusively to those in Glasgow.

There is currently a concentration of political power in Scotland that makes it easy for the rest of us to feel as though, thousands of kilometers away, there is not much we can do. Delegating such power to a few is misleading and dangerous. After all, 25 years of COP meetings have not been sufficient to halt the rise of carbon emissions.

As our prime minister and members of the newly formed cabinet temporarily distance themselves from us, we must not yield the power we still all hold: people power. We have a duty to mobilize our loved ones, our colleagues, and our communities to create a pressure for climate justice that is so strong it is felt all the way to Scotland.

We, the people, have the right to inform what is done in our name at COP. As the conference unfolds, we must use every tool at our disposal to ensure the outcome of the conference is one we are proud of.

Canadian representatives must not leave COP without raising the ambition of its climate plan, which must commit us to doing our fair share on the climate crisis while leaving no community behind. Real action means 60 per cent greenhouse gas emissions reduction compared to 2005 levels by 2030, a phase out of fossil fuels and a ramp up of renewable energy production.

It means ensuring workers and communities are supported throughout the transition and beyond it, in a decarbonized economy. It will require Canada to recognize Indigenous sovereignty, knowledge, traditions, laws and practices as inalienable rights.

Finally, Canada must increase its contribution to the Green Climate Fund to support climate mitigation, adaptation and green development in the global south while preparing to welcome those who will be displaced by the part of the climate crisis we are now unable to avoid.

We have many ways to use our people power, from calling our elected officials to discuss our COP expectations, to voicing them in the media and on other platforms accessible to us.

Some of us, a group of workers, youth, land defenders, parents and grandparents, educators and all others who share our commitment to climate justice, choose to go one step further, and at the halfway mark of COP26 on Saturday, peacefully took to the streets. It is together, united by a conviction that a better world is possible and within our reach, that we will ensure we too have a voice in Glasgow.

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